

# TRACING VISHNU THROUGH ARCHEOLOGICAL REMAINS AT THE WESTERN SLOPE OF MOUNT LAWU

## *Menelusuri Jejak Wisnu pada Tinggalan Arkeologi di Lereng Gunung Lawu*

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**Abstract.** *To date, The West Slope area of Mount Lawu has quite a lot of archaeological remains originated from Prehistoric Period to Colonial Period. The number of religious shrines built on Mount Lawu had increased during the Late Majapahit period and were inhabited and used by high priests (rsi) and ascetics. The religious community was resigned to a quiet place, deserted, and placed far away on purpose to be closer to God. All religious activities were held to worship Gods. This study aims to trace Vishnu through archaeological remains. Archaeological methods used in this study are observation, description, and explanation. Result of this study shows that no statue has ever been identified as Vishnu. However, based on archeological data, the signs or symbols that indicated the existence of Vishnu had clearly been observed. The archeological evidences are the tortoise statue as a form of Vishnu Avatar, Garuda as the vehicle of Vishnu, a figure riding Garuda, a figure carrying cakra (the main weapon of Vishnu), and soles of his feet (trivikrama of Vishnu).*

**Keywords:** *Mount Lawu, Symbols, Vishnu*

**Abstrak.** Kawasan Lereng Barat Gunung Lawu hingga saat ini cukup banyak menyimpan tinggalan arkeologi, baik yang berasal dari masa prasejarah hingga masa kolonial. Jumlah bangunan suci keagamaan yang didirikan mengalami peningkatan ketika masa Majapahit Akhir, yang diyakini dibangun dan dihuni oleh kaum *rsi* dan pertapa. Kaum agamawan tersebut sengaja mengundurkan diri ke tempat yang sunyi, sepi, dan jauh dari keramaian untuk mendekatkan diri kepada Tuhan. Sudah barang tentu kegiatan keagamaan yang dilakukan adalah pemujaan terhadap para dewa. Kajian ini ingin menelusuri jejak keberadaan Wisnu melalui tinggalan arkeologi yang ada. Untuk menyelesaikan permasalahan tersebut digunakan metode arkeologi yakni observasi, deskripsi, dan ekplanasi. Hasil dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa hingga sekarang belum ditemukan adanya arca Wisnu, namun berdasarkan tanda dan simbol yang berkaitan dengan Wisnu jelas teramati. Bukti-bukti tersebut adalah arca kura-kura yang merupakan salah satu wujud dari *avatara* Wisnu, Garuda wahana dari Wisnu, tokoh menunggang garuda, tokoh membawa *cakra* (senjata utama dari Wisnu), dan telapak kaki (*trivikrama* Wisnu).

**Kata kunci:** Gunung Lawu, Simbol, Wisnu

## 1. Background

To date, The West Slope area of Mount Lawu has quite a lot of archaeological remains, both originating from the Prehistoric Period to the Colonial Period. According to data from the Central Java Preservation Office as of December 2012, immovable Cultural Heritage Objects have been registered at 37 sites. Therefore, it suggests that this region had quite an important role in the distant past.

Several findings from the Prehistoric Period can be seen at the Sangiran Site, especially the Dayu Cluster located in Karanganyar Regency. In this cluster, a museum was built to accommodate the results of field research. Other findings from the megalithic tradition can be found at several points in the Matesih District area. These sites generally consist of upright stones arranged in a circle, including the Matesih Site, the Plosorejo Site, the Plumbon Megalithic Site, and the Watu Kandang Pakem Site (Purwanto and Titasari 2018, 42-43). However, based on the results of research the location of these sites is not oriented to the summit of Mount Lawu (Darmosoetopo 1975/1976, 23).

In the district of Tawangmangu there are several archaeological findings in the form of bangles stones (*watugelang*), *dakon* stones (*batu dakon*), stone mortars, menhirs, pots, beads, and *watu* cages (Arnawa 1987, 24-32). Specifically, the location of the enclosure (*watu kandang*) is oriented towards Mount Lawu, which stretches from west to east of Java Island. Meanwhile, in Ngargoyoso Subdistrict there is a Palm Site showing a pattern of the megalithic tradition, namely the archeological findings in the form of four statues which cultivation is still rough and not proportional. These statues have an average height of 50 cm. One statue has a streak of clouds with a rectangular line underneath. Both eyes closed and three other statues holding the genitals. In addition, some menhirs were found. The remains are placed upright irregularly. Penis as a symbol of fertility is prominently highlighted.

The number of religious shrines built on Mount Lawu have increased during the Late Majapahit period. These sacred buildings are Kethek, Cetho, Sukuh, Planggatan, Penggung, Cemoro Bulus Site, and Watu Pande Site. The shrines are generally built in the form of terraces with andesite rocks obtained from the surrounding environment. These sites are the object of our research reported in this paper.

Cetho Temple is a terraced terrace building with a total of 13, even based on van der Vlis reports in 1842 has 14 terraces. These number of terraces are not found in other ancient relics in Indonesia (Purwanto 2017, 36-37). Sukuh Temple has three steps stretching to the west-east direction facing west. The highest terrace is on the east side and the third terrace is the most sacred terrace. It can be said that the third terrace has the most concentration of findings. Another building that was erected in the form of a staircase is Planggatan. This temple has three terraces, but the first terrace is still covered by trees. Meanwhile, based on data from the Central Java Office for Cultural Heritage Conservation (Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Jawa Tengah) research in 1989 the Menggung Site has five terrace pages. However, after observing the site, it seems that the terrace boundaries are not very clear. Kethek Temple is a four-story building that is arranged with andesite rocks and each terrace is connected by a flight of stairs.

The interesting thing is at the top of Mount Lawu where based on the results of research by H.S. Priyanto (1999, 98) there are 10 buildings with terraces. The names of the buildings are Argo Dumilah, Argo Dumilah Timur, Argo Dumilah Utara, Argo Dumilah Barat, Argo Dalem Barat, Argo Dalem Northwest, Argo Dalem Timur, Sendang Drajat, and Dieng Market. In the building of Argo Dumilah, a short inscription was found that reads 1360 Ś (1438 AD).

Based on the dates shown in the sacred building components mentioned above, it is

known that the construction period was around the XV Century AD. The construction period was known as the end of the classical period in Indonesia, which was marked by the decline of big royal power who still embraced Hinduism and Buddhism, namely the Kingdom of Majapahit. The struggle for power and family conflict over inheritance rights to the royal throne is the main cause of the decline of Majapahit's greatness and glory. Besides the emergence of new forces in the coastal area along with the development of Islam, and the emergence of Europeans around 1500 (Djafar 2012, 69).

Furthermore the results of previous studies suggest that religious buildings located on the West Slope of Mount Lawu around the XV Century were inhabited and used by high priests (*rsi*) and ascetics (Purwanto 2017b; 2017c, 71-74; Purwanto and Titasari 2017, 100-105; Suprpta, Cahyono, and Lutfi 1998; Nugraha 2012, 107; Andriyati 2016). These people deliberately retreated to quiet and lonely places such as on the slopes of mountains, hills, riverbanks, and in the forest to learn about religion with the *rsi*. The *rsi* runs one of the stages of life in Hinduism, namely *Vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*. *Vanaprastha* is a level of life in requesting the way to escape by retreating to lonely places or to the forest. *Sanyasin* or *Bhiksuka* is a level of life that has reached self-perfection, although the person that practicing it is still alive (Munandar 2014, 201-202).

Meanwhile, based on archaeological data and written sources, it can be interpreted that people from the Majapahit Period glorify figures of a) Shiva, b) Buddhas, c) Shiva-Buddhas, d) worship of "Mountain Gods" (*Parwatarajadewa*), e) ancestral spirits who are deified, and f) other gods, such as Ganesha, Vishnu, and even the banner character (Munandar 2013, 5). For this reason, this study wants to explore one of the deities who became the target of worship by the *rsi* and ascetics

who lived on Mount Lawu, namely God Vishnu. Vishnu is one of the Gods Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva), who is incharge to preserve the universe.

Based on the description above, the formulation of the problem presented in this study is, what are the evidence related to the existence of Vishnu in the West Slope of Mount Lawu in the past? The general objective of this research is to contribute to the reconstruction of ancient history in Mount Lawu. Specifically, this study wants to find out the aspects of diversity that developed in Mount Lawu in the past, especially regarding the worship of God Vishnu.

This study focuses on religion, indeed, the basis used is from the perspective of religion. Being in the cultural context and dynamics of community life, the role of religion is very prominent. Wach (in Ghazali 2011, 40) states that the influence of religion on human culture depends on human thinking about God. Social and religious interactions are patterned on how they live and imagine God. The main thing for all religions is that religion functions as a regulator and at the same time cultivates it in the sense of expressing what is believed in cultural forms, namely ethical forms, building art, community structures, or customs.

Otto in Keentjaringanrat (2014, 65-66) once stated that all religious systems, beliefs, and religions in the world are centered on a magical thing that is considered to be the most mighty and sacred by humans. The supernatural and sacred things have qualities that are in fact impossible to be encompassed by the human mind and reason. However, it creates an awe fascinated attitude, will always attract human attention, and encourage the emergence of a desire to live a sense of unity with Him (God). Therefore, to achieve this supernatural, not infrequently in a religious system certain symbols are used.

To approach God, symbols are considered capable of delivering (the mediator) to God

himself. In Hinduism it is common to worship certain gods as a form of intermediary to God. If in the Spiro language (Munandar 1990, 15) it is stated that humans believe in other gods which are inferior to superhuman beings (God), they are afraid and hate demons and misery. Regarding the highest god, Andre Lang in Endraswara (2012, 165-166). once revealed that the god has a role in human life, namely as a guardian of natural order and decency. Furthermore, the religious theory about the deity developed into a belief in supernatural powers called *mana*. *Mans* is the emission of spirits and gods to humans who always succeed in their work.

Koentjaraningrat (2014, 80) states that the concept of religion is broken down into five components. The five components are closely related to each other including; 1) religious emotions; 2) belief system; 3) system of rites and ceremonies; 4) ritual and ceremonial equipment; 5) religious people. The aspect that will be revealed in this study is the belief system. The belief system is closely related and arises from religious emotions, that is, the vibrations of the human mind. This emotion will encourage all acts of spiritual culture that are sometimes sacred. The belief system in a religion manifests human thoughts and ideas about the attributes of God, about the appearance of the supernatural, the characteristics of magical powers, ancestral spirits, natural spirits of gods, evil spirits of ghosts, and other creatures (Endraswara 2012, 164). Based on this, this study will look for evidence of the existence of a deity who was worshiped or respected by past supporters in Mount Lawu. The deity can be said as a symbol or intermediary to approach the superhuman (God), especially to be united with Him.

## 2. Methods

Gunung Lawu is administratively located in two provinces (Figure 1), the western slope located in Central Java Province, covering

Karanganyar, Sragen and Wonogiri Regencies, while the eastern slope located in East Java Province, covering Ngawi and Magetan Regencies. This mountain extends from north to south, separated by the highway connecting Central Java and East Java Provinces. The northern topography is cone-shaped with the peak of Argo Dumilah as high as 3,265 meters above sea level, while the southern part is very complex consisting of steep hills, with a peak of Jobolarangan as high as 2,298 meters above sea level (Setyawan and Sugiyarto 2001, 115). The sites which are the objects of this research are all located in Karanganyar Regency.



**Figure 1.** Research site on Mount Lawu on red dot  
(Source: [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com) 2017)

The method in archeological research consists of observation, description, and explanation (Deetz in Akbar 2017, 618). Observation or data collection is done by collecting various writings, reports, or scientific journals and field surveys to archeological sites spread on the West Slope of Mount Lawu. This survey was conducted in January to February 2017. Observation in the field was accompanied by a description of the environmental situation and the distribution of existing archeological remains and the taking of pictures.

After the data has been collected and described properly, the next step is the explanation phase. This stage is done by using comparative and contextual analysis. Comparative analysis is an analysis by



comparing data with other data. Contextual analysis with attention to spatial dimensions, namely the relationship between data, for example between artifacts and artifacts, between artifacts with sites, and artifacts with the natural environment (Akbar 2014, 73).

### 3. Result and Discussion

On the research sites so far, no statue has been identified as God Vishnu. However, based on archeological data the signs or symbols that indicate the existence of Vishnu are clearly observed. One of the evidences that can be attributed to Vishnu is the tortoise statue (Figure 2). This tortoise statue is often found on research objects, except at the Planggatan and Menggung Sites. The physical dimensions of the tortoise statues are quite varied, starting from the small to the largest. Both as relief sculptures and intact statues. In the Kethek Temple, a tortoise statue was found during an excavation in 2005. This statue is located on the first terrace which is now invisible, possibly buried in the ground.

The discovery of a tortoise statue in Cetho Temple identified 8 statues. However, one of them is a feature attached to the ground on terrace VII. On terrace VI there are two statues as steps to the roofed building (Kyai Krincing Wesi). Terrace VII, in addition, features a tortoise attached to the ground. To the east there is a tortoise statue. In the south-north direction the statue of a human riding an animal. Two tortoise statues are placed on terrace VIII in the north, precisely in the row of relief panels. One statue is in the south, while the other placed in the middle of the relief panels. Terrace IX placed a tortoise statue on the southern stairs leading to terrace X. One statue is located on terrace XII, precisely behind the pyramid building from terrace XIII. However, this statue has no head left, only the body.

Special features attached to terrace VII are unique because of their position above Garuda features and are a combination of several

religious concepts which were made as whole. The combination comes from the *lingga-yoni* feature which used as a bird's head and neck. The *lingga-yoni* is made to meet as if it looks like someone having sex. The head *lingga* is equipped with three round shaped stones, while on the trunk there are reliefs of lizards and snakes. *Yoni* is made in the form of a triangle, at the top there are three frogs, three baby frogs, one tadpole, one *mimi*, and one crab tail. Meanwhile, the bird's body is made with the feature of a turtle supported by both wings flying (flapping).

The tortoise statue in Sukuh Temple is made in quite large size. Three-dimensional statues of number of three are located on terrace III in front of the main building in the form of trapezoid. In addition to intact statues, turtles are also carved as reliefs, namely the northern stage on one of the poles. Tortoise



**Figure 2.** Tortoise statues in the Kethek, Cetho, Sukuh, and Cemoro Bulus Temples (Source: Author)

statue depicted with an elephant, which was flown by eagle. Turtles and elephants are a curse of two siblings who are always fighting.

At Cemoro Bulus Site, the condition of the tortoise statue is still attached to the ground. The process is seen only sculpting on large enough rocks that are still buried.

Turtles are tossed together with elephants and soles of the feet. Regarding the size of tortoise statues at research sites (table 1).

Table 1. Size of Tortoise Statue at Research Sites (Source: Author)

No.	Sites	Size (cm)					Information
		Overall Length	Overall Width	Head Length	Head Weight	Thick	
1.	Candi Kethek	22	19	-	-	-	On terrace I
2.	Candi Cetho	27	42	14	8	17	On terrace VI, the steps are made. Its position above the only statue
3.	Candi Cetho	26	40	17	9	18	On terrace VI, the steps are made. His position is under the one statue
4.	Candi Cetho	75	65	21	13	16	On terrace VII, east of the turtle site
5.	Candi Cetho	-	-	-	-	-	The tortoise features stick to the ground
6.	Candi Cetho	53	54	22	18	22	On terrace VIII, in the southern part of the row of relief panels
7.	Candi Cetho	92	82	20	12	25	On terrace VIII, in the middle of a row of relief panels
8.	Candi Cetho	84	69	24	12	17	On terrace IX
9.	Candi Cetho	55	53	-	-	22	On terrace XII
10.	Candi Sukuh	241	202	54	40	58	On terrace III, south of oblesik north
11.	Candi Sukuh	234	198	54	39	42	On terrace III, behind the <i>Kyai Sukuh</i> building
12.	Candi Sukuh	215	85	21	34	52	On terrace III, north of the <i>Kyai Sukuh</i> building
13.	Candi Bulus	142	115	29	24	-	-

The tortoise statue in Hinduism is one of the *avatara* Vishnu. Called *kurmaavatara*. Some literatures recognize various *avatara* of Vishnu, among them there are ten that are better known as *Dasavatara Vishnu* which are listed in the *Varaha Purana* book. In contrast, in the *Bhagavata Purana* there are twenty-two *avatara* mentioned. According to Hindu beliefs in India, *dasavatara* is considered to be related to ten kinds of events in the world, when Vishnu is tasked with destroying various obstacles that hinder the rotation of the world. The Ten *Avatara Vishnu* according to *Varaha Purana* are as follows, *Matsyavatara* (fish), *Kurmavatara* (tortoise), *Varahavatara* (wild boar), *Narasimhavatara* (lion headed man), *Vamanavatara* (pygmy), *Parasuramavatara*, *Raghuramavatara*, *Krnavatara*, *Buddhavatara*, and *Kalkyavatara* (Maulana 1996/1997, 16).

The transformation of Vishnu into *Kurmavatara* was part of the *Samodramanthana* story. This story is also called *Amerthamathana*, which is the stirring of thesea of milk (*ksirnawa*) to get holy water (*tirtha amerta*). This story is a sacred story because in it there is a myth of the actions of the gods to obtain *amerta* water. It is said that thestirrer was Mount Mandara which was inserted into the ocean and supported by a large turtle incarnation of Vishnu. God Vasuki as a rope incarnated as a very long dragon wrapped around Mount Mandara.

The Indonesian version of this story became the story of the removal of Mount Mahameru by cutting off the top and lifting it to the sea. Therefore, Vishnu was incarnated as a turtle and the peak of Mount Mahameru was placed on his back. Brahma was transformed into a long snake and wrapped around the Mountain as a rope. By tugging on the rope, the top of Mahameru was successfully brought to Java Island (Tim Penyusun 2005, 43). Based on these descriptions, it can be ascertained that the tortoise statue is a form of symbol or sign of God Vishnu.

Thus, in fact there are two stories in Indonesia, namely 1) the use of Mount Mandara as a mean of sea turmoil with turtles as a base and snakes as twists, 2) the removal of Mount Mahameru (which is likened to Mount Mandara) from India to Java using turtle as a base and snake as a rope (Soekmono 1985, 47).

Turtles seems to be one of the important aspects in the architecture of sacred buildings on the West Slope of Mount Lawu because quite many turtle statues are found. As explained before, the turtle is the incarnation of Vishnu which is used to support Mount Mandarato get holy water. It seems to be understood why the *rsi* and ascetics at that time always displayed the statue of a turtle, because Mount Lawu itself was considered a sacred mountain that gave out holy water.

Mount Lawu is considered as Mount Mandara (Mahameru), this is supported by story from *Tangtu Panggĕlaran* which states Mount Lawu is part of the ruins of Mount Mahameru when brought by the gods through the sky of the island of Java. The other collapse became Gunung Wilis, Kamput, Kawi, Arjuna, and Kemukus. According to Poerbatjaraka, Mount Katong was identified with Mount Lawu. In other word, Mount Katong is the ancient name for Mount Lawu (Poerbatjaraka 1964, 54-55). The change in the name Katong to Lawu was discussed by Purwanto and Titasari (2018, 41-42) which revealed that the reason for changing the name was based on the position and function of the mountain itself in each era.

Meanwhile, the embodiment of the theme of holy water is also manifested in the architecture of Suku Temple. There are two architectural components that function as a medium of "process sacralization" to produce holy water. The two components are in the form of water installations (gutters) (Suprpta, Cahyono, and Lutfi 1998, 69). The relief which is now on terrace III of Suku Temple was originally placed or originated

from a *patirthan* (holy water) building. The statement can be understood, considering that around Sukuh Temple there are many springs. But traces of *patirthan* have not been found until now. In one of the reliefs there is an inscription which partly reads “*padamēl rikang bukur tirta sunya*“, which means "made in a hermitage where there is holy water" (Prasodjo 1990/1991, 18). This sentence also found in inscriptions from Cetho Temple. It is clear that the sacred building on the West Slope of Mount Lawu is closely related to holy water (*tirtha amerta*). It seems that Samudramanthena's story inspired the architectural form of the sacred building located on Mount Lawu, so it is certain that the existence of Vishnu is very likely to be known by the rsi and ascetics who lived there.

The story that is still strongly related to the story above is the story of Garuda. The story is about the life of the Winata (Garuda's mother) became Kadru's (Dragons mother) slave because of losing bets regarding the color of Uchaisrawa Horse coming out of the screening of Mount Mandara. Originally the tail of the Uchaisrawa Horse was all white, but at the behest of Kadru to his son (the dragons), finally the tail of the Uchaisrawa Horse was sprinkled so that it turn to black color. Since Winata lost, she slave of Kadru. Garuda, who felt sorry for his mother's suffering, helped care for Kadru's children. At the request of Garuda, Kadru wanted to free his mother from slavery on condition he was given holy water (*amerta*). In his search, Garuda met God Vishnu, who then said to Garuda: "Hi Garuda, if you want Amerta, please ask me". Meanwhile, Vishnu asked that Garuda be willing to be his vehicle. Garuda succeeded in freeing his mother's suffering from Kadru slavery with *amerta* from God Vishnu which is put in a kamandalu jug. Since then, Garuda has become Vishnu's vehicle (<https://kebudur.kemdikbud.go.id/>).

Then it can be said that the existence of features, reliefs, and Garuda figurines is a clue

to the existence of Vishnu on research sites. It has been said before, on terrace VII of Cetho Temple there is a feature of Garuda Bird which is flapping its wings. In Sukuh Temple there are two forms of Garuda embodiment, namely in the form of reliefs and statues. The interesting thing is Garuda statue was made with human-like shapes. These two statues are located on terrace III and are now without a head. Garuda statue 1 has 198 cm height (104 cm legs and 54 cm body) and 63 cm thick. This statue is standing with both legs found. Both wings were flapped, but the right side was damaged. The body and legs are described as sturdy and strong. On the back of this statue there is an inscription that reads as follows:

*lawase rajęgwęsi du  
k pinęrp kapętgę de  
ne wong męđang ki hęmpu ra  
ma karubuh alabuh gęni ha  
rbut bumi kacaritane  
babajang mara mari setra  
hanang tang bango  
1363.*

English translation; "The duration of Rajegwesi when attacked (and) was suppressed by the Medang people. The invincible Ki Hempu Rama (and) throws (himself) into the fire. (People) fighting over the land. The story is that *Babajang* comes in the place of treatment there is 1363 (Darmosoetopo 1975/1976, 76-77)".

While on the shoulder four coconuts, two eggplants, one jackfruit, and uncertain kind of vegetables are being carried (Purwanto and Titasari 2019, 80).

Garuda II statue has height of 180 cm (104 cm feet and 53 cm body) (Figure 3). The position of the statue is in standing position with the attitude of the hands that flapping its wings. At the front of this statue there is an inscription read *sagara muni murub kutug ring akasa* 1364, which means Sagara (name of person), a sacred hermit lit (incense) whose





**Figure 3.** Garuda Statues and Relief at Cetho and Suku Temples  
(Source: Author)

smoke overflowed in the sky 1364 S (1442 AD) (Rahayu 2016, 27-28). The description gives instructions about a hermit named Sagara, who apparently was carrying out a ceremony by lighting incense. Maybe this ceremony was intended for God Vishnu. In a storage of statues called *Rumah Arca*, located 100 meters from Suku Temple, there is the head of the Garuda statue. According to interview with the custodian of Suku Temple, it is likely that the head of this statue is the head of Garuda in the Suku Temple, but the statue of Garuda has not been confirmed yet (Interview from Gunawan, 2017). Meanwhile, Garuda reliefs were found on the gate of Paduraksa Terrace I and Terrace III on the northern obelisk.

Clues regarding the whereabouts of Vishnu are also found in the northern obelisk. In one of the buildings that looks like a pillar there is a relief of a figure who is riding an eagle (Figure 4) and is described in the style of a puppet that is face facing sideways. The hair ornaments (*mauli*) is in the form of urate. Garuda's head is depicted as human. Supraptat al. (1998, 67) mentioned that this relief depicts Garuda flying its mother (Winata) after being released with ransom. A different interpretation was put forward by John N. Miksic and Supratikno Rahardjo, stating that the relief depicts the figure of Vishnu on the basis of comparison with the statues of the embodiment of Airlangga as Vishnu in Belahan Temple,

East Java (Miksic 1996, 110; Rahardjo 2011, 180).

The author agrees with the interpretation of Miksic and Rahardjo. If this character describes the Winata, why the headdress was chosen with *supiturang*. Most such headdresses are worn by men. On one of the north pillars of this relief, there are two female figures by Darmosoetopo (1975/1976, 49) identified as Kadru and Winata. Her hair is shown with a normal bun, without using *supiturang*. If the figure riding the Garuda is Winata, his hair must be curled up as a woman's features or his description is the same as a woman's relief carved on one of the other pillars. According to the opinion of the writer this figure is Vishnu in the Garudeya story. At the time Vishnu gave



**Figure 4.** Relief Figure Riding a Garuda  
(Source: Author)

amerta, in return Garuda was ready to be mounted (vehicle) Vishnu.

Garudeya's story which is still related to Vishnu is also found in the reliefs carved on the curly, the place is still in the northern obelisk. There are three sections, the lower room depicts five figures who are standing. The upper room represents five *kalpataru* trees. The topmost room represents a house with a gate open. Equipped with a variety of weapons, the most visible is the *cakra*. Garuda bird is seen in front of the gate. According to Suprpta, Cahyono, and Lutfi (1998, 67) this relief depicts the scene of the eagle when requesting *amerta* which is kept very secret by Vishnu at his place of residence (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Vishnu resides  
(Source: Author)

Other evidence is the soles of the feet found on the Cemoro Bulus Site (Figure 6). There are three remnants of this sole of this foot. The left foot in the center is fully carved facing forward with 34 cm long and 24 cm wide. The other two legs are facing right and left in a worn state so that only the back is left. The fingers are out of sight. This relief is carved into the body of *mimi* (*mintuna*). Concerning the soles of the feet, it can be interpreted as the soles of God Vishnu or often referred to as quarterly (three steps) of God Vishnu. Such interpretation is reasonable, considering the number of feet carved in a stone on the CemoroBulus Site amounted to three. They can also be connected with foot reliefs on the Ciaruton inscription issued by King Purnawarman. The sound is as follows.

*vikrantasyavānipateḥ*  
*srīmataḥm pūrnavarmmanah*  
*tārumānagarendrasya*  
*viṣṇor iva padadvayam*

English Translation; “Of the valiant lord of the earth, the illustrious Pūrnavarman, [who is] the ruler of the town of Tarūma, [is this] the pair foot-prints like unto Vishnu’s” (Vogel 1925, 22).

This inscription is a tribute to King Purnawarman by equating his feet with God Vishnu. The word *vikranta*, which is found in line I, means to attack. It is apparently deliberately connected with the *trivikrama* or three steps of Vishnu around the world (Sumadio 1975, 39-49).

This *trivikrama* is the three steps of Vishnu which are carried out daily around the world, namely starting from east to Zenith (step 1), from Zenith to west (step 2), and from west back to east (step 3). Through *Suryaloka* or *Suryagrha* which is located so high that it is not visible to humans (Moens in Santiko 1994, 14). Vishnu is said to have the nature of the sun, because his three-step journey matches the sun.



In Vedic verses, Vishnu is described as a god who can rule the three worlds with these three steps. This incident is expressed in terms *visnu karma-krānta*, *vikrānta*, atau *vikramana*, *krānta*, which eventually became world domination (like Vishnu) with its three steps (Santiko 1994, 14-15). Vishnu *trivikrama* in the form of statues is often manifested in a statue that stands upright with one foot and the other leg raised up. Although his body is depicted very large (other humans look small nearby), but Vishnu's face is not demonic.

Another sign or symbol of Vishnu is the relief of the figure carrying the *cakra*. As usual in a sacred building, to distinguish the statues of the gods, we can observe the special features of the iconography. *Cakra* is the main weapon of Vishnu, for that reason, the relief that carries a large *cakra* is possible to depict the character of Vishnu. This relief is found in Cetho and Sukuh Temples. In the Cetho Temple the relief is located on Terrace VIII along with 15 other relief panels. It is carved in a square stone which has a height of 30 cm, a length of 45 cm, and a thickness of 15 cm. There are two figures depicted. The figure standing does not turn upside down with his right hand carrying the *cakra*, his left hand pointing forward. The attitude of the feet is faced right and left (uphill). Wearing cloth from the body to the knees. The rest of the cloth is left in the middle along the calf. Visible right hand is wearing a shoulder bracelet. The right ear appears to be wearing earrings. The decoration of the necklace is a bit vague. His hair wears a kind of crown, but it's



**Figure 6.** Foot-prints on the Cemoro Bulus Site (Source: Author)

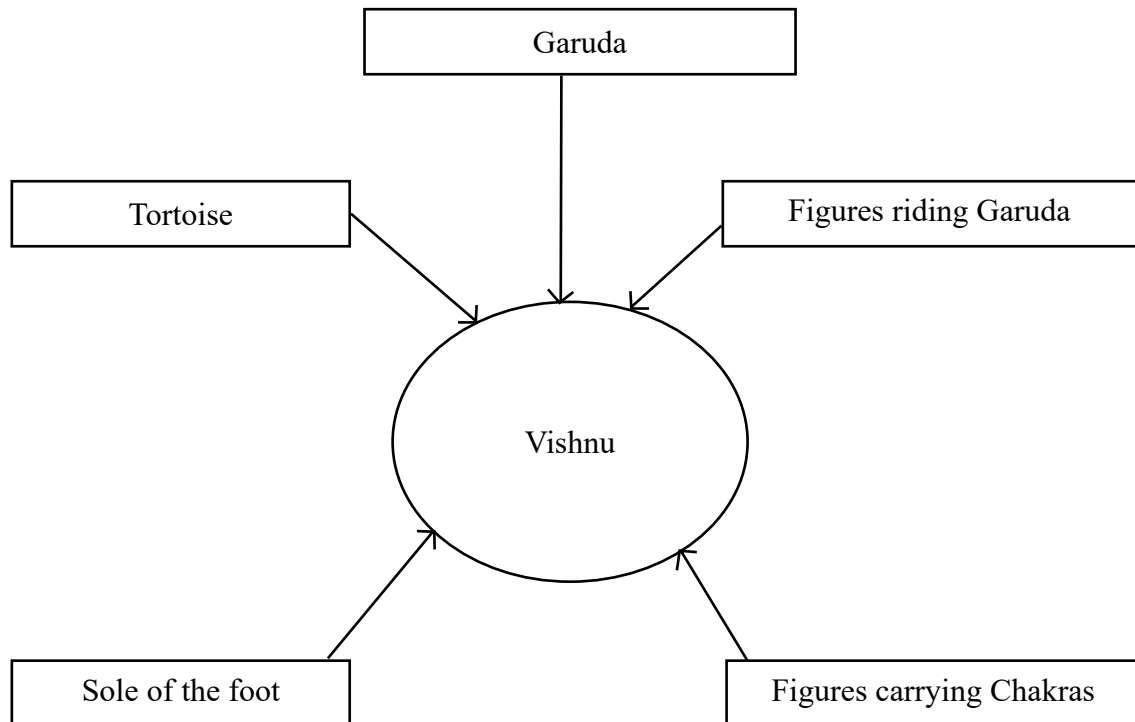
not very clear. The other figure is carved upside down. Both hands are brought together in front of the chest. Wearing only half the body cloth, it appears only up to the knees. Headdress like an ascetic turban. Seeing the attitude of his hand and turban, most likely this figure depicts a priest (*rsi*). Between the two figures there is a *kalpataru* tree with two buds below.



**Figure 7.** Figure relief takes *cakra* (Source: Author)

The same relief is also found at Sukuh Temple (Figure 7) and carved into the northern obelisk at the top. It depicts a figure carrying a *cakra* raised and behind him is seen Garuda standing still. The relief of Vishnu is confronted by a figure who turns around as if he was hung on a tree, but this relief is not in a panel like in Cetho Temple. It seems that this character's origin is interpreted as Vishnu. Seeing weapons and weapons leaning towards this interpretation.

The set of symbols above if (Figure 8) is related to one another strengthens the suspicion that the *rsi* who live in the sites of



**Figure 8.** The set of symbols from Vishnu

research objects also glorify God Vishnu. Vishnu is a member of Trimurti as the protector or guardian of the world. Worship of Vishnu has been known since the Vedic Period. Vishnu has been alluded to in *Rgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. In these books Vishnu has not been regarded as a god of high status as in later times. From the Mahabharata it can be seen the increasing development of Vishnu. Vishnu who is first as a sun god, then rose to become one of the Trimurti Gods. The history of the development of Vishnu's position can be clearly known in Old Indian literature (Maulana 1984, 32-34; 1996, 14-15).

In Indonesia, the worship of Vishnu is not as popular as Shiva. Early indications about Vishnu were found in the Tarumanegara Kingdom based on the Ciaruton inscription. The written description explains that Raja Purnawarwan at that time was a Vaishnava sect. Several years later the allegation was corroborated by the findings of the statue of Vishnu Cibuaya I, Vishnu Cibuaya II, and the statue of Rajasri. Furthermore, the description of Vishnu has also been described in a gold

plate found in Gemuruh, Wonosobo, Central Java. In Banon and Lara Jonggrang temples, they were held together with the gods Shiva and Brahma.

In East Java, Vishnu was once the main deity in the sacred building, which is the statue in the Belahan Temple located on the eastern slope of Mount Penanggungan. Vishnu is left sitting in his second vehicle, Garuda. Flanked by two goddess statues known to be the embodiment of his wife (Sri and Laksmi). Veneration of Vishnu developed until the Late Majapahit period. Archeological evidence shows *rsi* and ascetics did not escape glorifying this god.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Rsi* and ascetics live in the realm of religion, naturally the aspect of worshiping certain figures is a natural thing. Based on the results of this study, one of the deities who was worshiped by the clergy in the West Slope of Mount Lawu in the past was Vishnu. Although the statue of Vishnu has not been found, archeological data providing a sign of

Vishnu's existence can be clearly observed. The archeological evidence is the tortoise statue, which is a form of Vishnu Avatara, Garuda as the vehicle of Vishnu, figure riding Garuda, character carrying *cakra* (the main weapon of Vishnu), and soles of the feet (Vishnu's *trivikrama*).

### Suggestions

Based on field observations, most of the sites that were the objects of this study were designated as tourist attractions. For this reason, there must be good cooperation among stakeholders so that the negative impacts caused can be managed well. In that way, the contents of the values in it can be witnessed again for generations to come.

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